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THE KUSASE (*continued*)

The Family Compound (Yir) *and the Shrines* (Bagr) *which it contains*

•351 171 KUSASE compounds (*Ya*, s. *Yir*) are roughly circular in shape, as are the huts which they contain, and are widely scattered like those of the Nankanse, Namnam, Talense, and Kasena, but there is one marked difference which immediately strikes the eye between the Kusase house and those already described. The former are not flat-roofed, but are neatly thatched (see Fig. 86). I now propose to describe a typical Kusase compound in detail. The main entrance which faces west is known as *zan pak nore* (compare Nankane *zenore*). It leads directly into the main yard which is also the cattle-kraal. The hut immediately on the left of the main entrance (it is sometimes on the right) is called *zɔŋ*, pl. *zon*. This hut is nominally where goats and fowls are shut up at night, but it is also used in the wet season as the place where the senior males in the compound sit and talk. When the head of a compound dies, his body is passed through a back doorway in the *zɔŋ* hut, instead of being taken through the main entrance. The *zɔŋ* (or *zɔŋo*) hut seems to figure largely on many such ceremonial occasions. Immediately outside the entrance of the compound is a grass-roofed hut without any walls, known as *suk* in Kusal (*Paka* in [176] Nankane). It contains a shrine called a *Wen bagr* (God's shrine), a circular mound like that seen in Fig. 142 at Tumu among the Isala. Let into the top of this mound is a sheep's horn and a stone. The stone is called *bagr bugr* (the *bugr* of the *baga*). The head of the compound and others sit or recline on this flat top, and in the very hot weather the compound head may sleep on it. It is sacrificed to at the sowing season, at the harvest, and when new beer is made from the first of the crops. 'The *Tenedaw*' sacrifices to the land, I, the Chief, sacrifice on this *bagr*.'

751 Above the doorway of the *zɔŋ* hut, through which the corpse of the head of the house is carried to burial, is a black cross (see Fig. 87) to guard against lightning.[1] The same symbol is put on trees in Kusase farms under which the farmer shelters, and for the same reason. At

[1] The same symbol is used among the Isala to protect crops from menstruating women.

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FIG. 86. A Kusase compound

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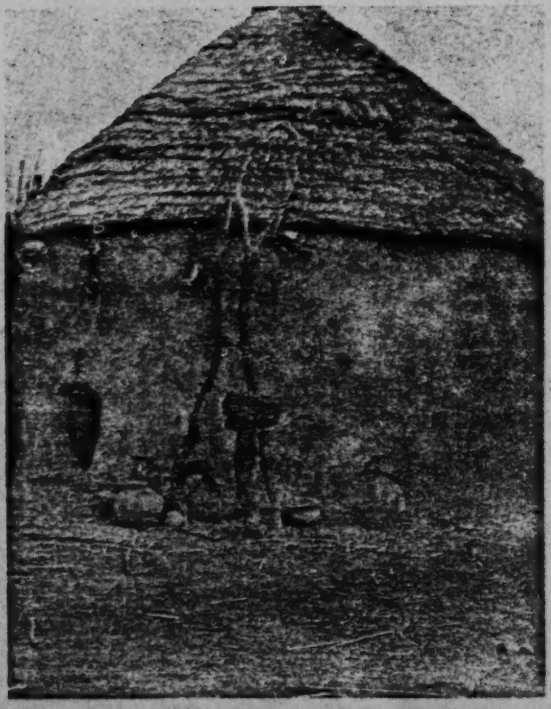

FIG. 87. The *zɔŋ* hut. Note cross above doorway

[Facing p. 380]

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751 778 the doorway of the *zɔŋ* hut stands a post with a large stone on top, and a long stick, bent in the shape of a butterfly net and bound round with leaves. 'I tie up the lightning with this', said my informant. On [515] the ground near the stick is a pot containing 'roots' in a decoction in which the inmates of the compound bathe. 'I also use this *sa-bagr* (lightning shrine) to bring rain, only the lightning I tie.'

778 769 All the above may be seen in Fig. 87. On the left of this doorway is a shrine (*ba bagr*) of the spirit 'of the owner of the compound' (an ancestor?) with a cow horn the remains of a past sacrifice hanging on the hut wall above it. To the left of this again is another shrine, that of the 'owner's' mother. Resting on the *ba-bagr* is a pot, called a *ba' bugr*. 'This pot is the shrine of spirits once served by my father and my elder brother. I brought some earth from it (a *bagr*?) and put it in the pot, so I now say when sacrificing, "My father receive these offerings and give to your *bugr*", instead of saying, "My father receive and give to your father". I own my grandfather's *Wen* (Nankane *Ɣini*), it can descend (on my death) to whoever he (the spirit) names, but the spirit of our ancestor always goes to the eldest.'

351 343 [534] 342 Passing now through the main entrance, between two grass-roofed huts, one of which is the *zɔŋ*, the other called *nos dog* (fowl house), we enter the *zan-pak* (cattle-kraal). The cattle in this case were in charge of Fulani herdsmen who were paid by being given the milk. Inside this yard were two other huts, one for goats and sheep, and one for a horse. Surrounding this yard were four suites of rooms called *dog* (compare Nankane *deo*, pl. *detto*). These *dog* were those of:

(*a*) *Ɣi-dan's* wife.
(*b*) An unmarried son of the *Ɣi-dan*.
(*c*) The wife of the *Ɣi-dan's* younger brother.
(*d*) *Dog* of another of *Ɣi-dan's* wives.

351 342 778 755 Inside the main yard is a hut with two doors opposite each other called *zon-tug* (lit. pass straight through), where the women sit. The second doorway of this hut leads right into the yard (*zak*) of one of the *dog* (suites) in which is a shrine called *meŋ Wen* (lit. one's own God), a stone let into a circular mud mound. Beside this shrine is a pot full of roots, called *dendeuk duk* or chameleon's pot. 'I saw two chameleons one day copulating. I was told this is a forbidden thing, so I went to one who had medicine for this and he told me to bring roots. When a child is born to me, I bathe it with water from the roots. Before the *baa* (soothsayer) told me to do this, my children used to die.'

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In a corner beside this *wen bay* is another lightning protector, a long stick with one end bent into a hoop, also a pot containing roots. 'When the rain does not fall, I sacrifice to it, saying, "God and the land, I want to beg water, because corn, beans, and other grain are withering." When it does rain, the person who made the sacrifice has to stand here in the rain for some time and not go into the room. The bent stick is for tying the lightning. Before this sacrifice is made, and before the rain is called, the one who is about to do so, bathes with water in which the roots in the pot are soaked.' This particular *dog*, which is that of the senior wife, contained the following huts:

(*a*) A small hut for boys, sons of the *Yi-dan* called *bis dog* (boys' room).
(*b*) The hut of the senior wife of the *Yi-dan*.
(*c*) A kitchen (*daan*), *daana* in Nankane, unroofed, but behind it is another kitchen, roofed, used in the wet season.

Each *dog* is identical in construction; a sleeping-room, and a dry- and wet-season kitchen surrounded by its own private yard. In the centre of all these women's quarters is a square hut, called *yi-dan-dog* where the head of the compound sleeps. Joined on to the above compound, but with a separate entrance, is another compound, a replica of the first. It is that of the eldest son of the *Yi-dan*. Among the Kusase, as among the Nankanse, an eldest son may 'go out', that is go away and build a new homestead some hundred yards or more from that of his father, or he may have his home adjoining that of his parent but with a separate entrance. The son in this case had done the latter. He possessed his own *Wen bay* (*Yini* in Nankane), not a large flat-topped circular shrine like his father's, but just a small earth mound. This son's compound contained three yards, each containing one living hut and two kitchens. He had a separate grain-store independently of his father. Among the Kusase these grain-stores are not inside, but outside the compounds, differing in this respect from the Nankanse.

The *zɔŋ* hut, already mentioned, also contained the 'medicine pot', set by his slayer, for the spirit of a man who has been murdered or killed in war. This shrine, after the death of its original owner, will be kept in the *zɔŋ* hut (compare the Nankane *tobega*). The following is a description of this custom among the Kusase.

'When one man kills another, he has to get a *yur* (pot). This pot he will "set" and bathe with the medicine which it contains for

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592 356 ashamed of it and exert himself to the utmost to have it repaired. But a poor man who has the energy and can himself build and thatch, or has a son or sons skilled in these crafts, will generally keep his homestead in a satisfactory condition. On the other hand, even men who own cattle and sheep are apt to wait until the thatch is rotted through and the walls collapse before undertaking essential repairs. The ingrained thrift of the natives, fostered by their narrow margin of sufficiency in food-supplies, induces them often to submit to discomfort which would tax less hardy folk to breaking-point rather than expend food and other resources to alleviate it.

356 Indoors, Tale homesteads are usually surprisingly tidy. A good housewife sees that her quarters are swept every morning. Litter indoors is a sign that the mistress of those rooms is a lazy or a sick woman, or one too harassed by family cares or poverty to look after her home properly. A good housewife has her floors regravelled and beaten almost every year to keep them hard and smooth.

592 But individual idiosyncrasies do not affect the layout of a homestead; for apart from minor variations this depends wholly on the constitution of the domestic unit. The layout of a homestead is an index to the structure of the domestic family occupying it.

The simplest domestic and procreative unit is the elementary family—a man, his wife, and their young children—occupying their own homestead. Often the man's mother (*ma*), either his own mother (*ma dɔŋarug*—the mother [of] bearing), or a surviving co-wife (*nentaa*) of his mother lives with him. The whole group constitutes one household, that is, a single economic unit all the members of which are mutually dependent on one another for the production of their common food-supply and the satisfaction of most other wants. Essentially this is a matter of pooling labour and skill, of utilizing land in common, of drawing on the food, livestock, and to some extent monetary resources built up by joint effort, for the benefit of any member of the unit, and of mutual assistance from any private resources that the members may have.

592 351 778 A good example of a domestic family of this kind is that of Ɔndieso of Tɔŋ-Guŋ, a man in the late thirties whose homestead stands on the border of Tɔŋ-Dekpieŋ and Gbizug. Outside his homestead, 10 or 12 yards from the gateway, stands the usual shade tree. Ɔndieso's tree is also, like almost all shade trees, an ancestor shrine. Between it and the gateway is a bare space, with the midden heap (*tampɔŋar*) on one side and a large, round, flat-topped ancestor shrine built of pile on the other. It is the shrine of his late father's *Yin*. One or more ancestor shrines stand thus at the entrance to every homestead. '*Ɔn nso yirlo*—it owns the house', the natives say, meaning by this a spiritual and not material ascendancy in the affairs of the family. It stands outside, at the entrance, as a spiritual sentry guarding the welfare of the house.

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If the head of the house is still junior in status in the lineage hierarchy, as Ɔndieso is, it will be the shrine dedicated to his father's Destiny (*yin*), or it may be his father's divining (*bakologo*) shrine. The house is still under the spiritual jurisdiction of Ɔndieso's dead father, though he himself now owns it in the temporal sense. A man of greater social maturity, with grown children and higher lineage status, would very likely have his own *yin* or *bakologo* shrine at his gateway. His house is established; it is no longer the fulfilment of his father's destiny, as is the house of a young man, though it may still be known by his father's or grandfather's name. For as long as a homestead remains standing it is known by the name of the man who first built it.

A bird's-eye view would show a homestead as covering a roughly circular or oval area (Figs. 2*a* and 2*b*). The space in front of the gateway (*zanɔne*—at the gateway) belongs pre-eminently to the menfolk. The public phases of funeral and mortuary ceremonies, which are corporate concerns of the lineage and are conducted by the men, take place there. When anything touching the rights, duties, or interests of the head of the family in his capacity as a member of a particular lineage calls for consultation with fellow members of the lineage, the *zanɔne* is the gathering place. It is the proper place for him to receive greetings, condolences, or congratulations, and to conduct formal negotiations in a matter such as the payment of bride-price owed to him or by him. In the dry season he often rests there, beneath the shade tree, during the sweltering afternoon, chatting with a friend or fondling an infant left in his charge while its mother is busy indoors. Women of the house come and go freely, and often sit or lounge about in front of the gateway; but when 'an affair of the men (*buraas yɛl*)' is in progress they keep away.

The gateway (*zanɔr*) always faces west to south-west, 'where the sun sets (*nintaŋ nluut*)'. This is a convention never broken by the Tallensi, though they have neither a naturalistic explanation nor a mystical rationalization for it, and it is not subject to mystical sanctions.[1]

The gateway is a V-shaped opening, about a foot wide at the base and 3 to 4 feet wide on top, between two round pillars (*meeloŋ*) forming part of the wall of the house. Large irregularly spaced holes are made in these pillars for short logs to be inserted at night as cross-bars against which a heavy, hollow board (*bchuŋ*), cut from a tree-trunk, or a bundle of poles can be leaned to close the gateway. Tallensi say that they build the gateway thus in order to bar it the more securely against the

[1] As the rain-bearing winds blow from the south-east, and the tornadoes that begin and end the rainy season come from an easterly direction, it is possible that the placing of the doorway on the western side of the house is an adaptation to this feature of the climate. Anyone who has experienced the discomfort of a tornado whirling straight into a room, or of a heavy rain, in this region will appreciate the usefulness of placing the only entrance into a homestead on the lee side. But no native has ever given me this obvious explanation, though this may be due to inadequate inquiries on my part.

[Text is continued on p. 54.—Ed.]

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ingress of wild animals—in particular, the ubiquitous and thievish hyena, which prowls the settlements at night in search of offal and unprotected small stock—and the egress of their own livestock. Every gateway in Taleland must be barred at night, except that of the Chief of Tongo. This is a strict rule, and it is one of the conventions defining the social personality of the Chief of Tongo. It is also a sign of the privacy of the domestic unit in respect of the intimate life of its members.

Entering the *zanɔr* of a homestead, the visitor finds himself in the *sapak* or *nayaŋ*, the cattle-yard. It is the dirtiest and most insanitary spot in the homestead, its undressed surface being strewn with rubbish and with the dung or droppings of livestock, if the owner has any. One often sees human excrement in a corner, for young children and sick people defecate there at night. Ɔndieso is a very poor man, even by Tale standards, as the sagging roofs and dilapidated walls of his homestead lead one to suspect, possessing neither cattle nor sheep nor goats, and but a handful of poultry. Hence his *sapak* is very small, less than a dozen square yards in area. Ɔndieso's neighbour, the Gbizug tendaana, has a large *sapak*, about 80 square yards in area; but he has cattle, sheep, goats, and a couple of donkeys, not to speak of many fowls and guinea-fowls.

From the *sapak* one can see how the cylindrical rooms are laid out and distributed in the roughly circular or oval area occupied by the homestead. The first room, usually on the right as one enters through the *zanɔr*, is the *zɔŋ*. It is the only room with a doorway in the *sapak*, and it has a special significance in the structure of the house. It is the room *par excellence* of the head of the house (*yirdaana*), fittingly placed between the open space before the *zanɔr*, with which his public activities are associated, and the *sapak*, which shelters his most valuable possessions, his livestock. Cattle, sheep, and goats constitute material wealth, the repository of labour and thrift; but they mean much more than that to the Taleŋ. They are pre-eminently the property of men, associated with men's major interests. They are the medium by means of which wives are acquired, and thus posterity assured. They are also the principal objects of sacrifice, by means of which the natives maintain their relations with their ancestor spirits and other mystical powers. In bad weather the *zɔŋ* itself is used to shelter the livestock. Inside the *zɔŋ*, along the wall, little cubicles are made for the *yirdaana*'s fowls to nest in. A man of substance often has a double *zɔŋ*, consisting of two chambers with a low doorway in the partition wall. The rear chamber is used as a stall for young calves or sheep, and the front chamber, communicating with the *sapak*, as a stall for a milch-cow or a donkey, for the night.

The *zɔŋ* is identified with the *yirdaana*'s status and social personality. It is a bare room, for a man does not keep valuable possessions, weapons,

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the *zɔŋ*, they symbolize the continuity of the lineage of which the master of that house is but one member, a link in a process to which he makes his greatest contribution as a father and head of a house. Hence the *zɔŋ* of a lineage head, being the sanctuary of all the lineage ancestors, is regarded as the *zɔŋ* of the whole lineage, and his *zanɔr* as the *zanɔr* of the lineage. When the Hill Talis were forcibly expelled in 1910–11 and their homesteads demolished, the heads of the maximal lineages later came back by stealth to rebuild a small part of their *zɔŋ* walls, for they could not appropriately sacrifice to their lineage ancestors elsewhere than in the lineage *zɔŋ*. If a woman commits adultery, she sins against her husband's lineage ancestors, thus imperilling the health and welfare of her husband and children. An adulteress, that is to say, transgresses the rights over her reproductive powers vested absolutely in her husband's lineage. Thus, if a woman is suspected of adultery she is subjected to the ordeal of entering (*kpe*) the lineage *zɔŋ* or *zanɔr*. She must face the ancestors directly, for she has committed an outrage against the lineage principle the absolute value of which is symbolized in and safeguarded by the ancestor spirits.[1] If she is guilty and does not confess, she will get ill and perhaps die. Women are terrified of this ordeal, which rarely fails to produce a confession.

Though they come and go freely in the *sapak* and *zɔŋ* in the ordinary course of domestic life, the women and children belong specifically to the domestic quarters proper. These lie behind a low wall (*yɛbog*) a yard or so in height and about the same in length, at the back of the *sapak*. This wall usually runs between the back of a kitchen or storeroom and a large bullet-shaped chamber from 7 to 10 feet high and 6 to 10 feet in diameter at the base. This is the granary (*buur*). One suffices for a small family like Ɔndieso's. A wealthier man with a more numerous household may have one principal granary and one or more smaller ones. A granary has only one opening, at the top, covered with a lid of tightly plaited thatch like an enormous hat.

In the granary, again, Tale architecture embodies a fundamental element in the structure of the domestic unit. A bird's-eye view of a Tale homestead would show the principal granary as standing roughly in the centre of the circle of rooms, rising like a beacon between that section of the homestead which in use, thought, and feeling is the domain of the men, and that section which forms the living-quarters and is ruled by the women. The granary is the pivot on which the smooth working of the domestic unit turns. It holds the millet and guinea corn which provide the staple food of the natives. Without this, life cannot be satisfactorily sustained from one harvest to the next, and the household cannot exist, let alone keep its unity. What a sufficiency of food means to the Tallensi has been described in our previous

[1] This is the complementary notion to that of 'polluting the room' described above, p. 28.

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343 181 are the emblems of his individuality. They participate in it, for they are imbued with his body 'dirt (*dayət*)'—a concept which has a physiological facet, meaning the exuviae adhering to a man's garments, quiver, or other objects constantly handled by him, and a mystical facet implying the quintessence of his individuality. The Talis also acknowledge this complex association between a man and his granary and other intimate possessions, expressing it in analogous customs, in the routine of family life and in their ideals of family relations.

351 To enter the living-quarters of a homestead one climbs over the low dividing wall (*yɛbəg*) at the back of the *sapak* by means of a step (*bimbimər*) and descends, by a similar step on the other side, into an irregular courtyard (*dɛndɔŋo*, pl. *dɛndɔma*) of beaten gravel, which is surrounded by a number of rooms. According to the wealth, rank, or status of the *yirdaana* this *dɛndɔŋo* varies in size from about 20 to about 6 square yards.

592 593 342 351 This *dɛndɔŋo* belongs to the principal woman (*dugdaana*) of the house. The *dɛndɔma* of junior wives are smaller. In Ɔndieso's house the senior woman is his mother's surviving co-wife, whom he calls his 'younger mother' (*mapit*, lit. 'mother's younger sister'), and who has remained with him since the death of his father. Her rooms occupy roughly the left half of the homestead, facing inwards from the *sapak*. From this *dɛndɔŋo*, turning right between a small room beside the granary and a larger room straight ahead, one enters a similar *dɛndɔŋo* in the middle of another set of rooms, those of Ɔndieso's wife. These take up roughly the right half of the homestead, facing inwards. The *yirdaana*'s mother's (own mother, or proxy-mother) rooms always occupy the position of honour in the centre of the arc; his senior wife's (*poyakpeem*) rooms lie on the right-hand side of these; his second wife's, or his younger brother's senior wife's rooms lie on the left, looking inwards. The rooms of the other wives of the head of the family or of his brothers are distributed as convenience dictates. For example, wives who are clan sisters will usually have adjoining quarters; wives who get on badly will be put in well-separated rooms. If none of a man's father's widows is living with him, and he has more than one wife, his senior wife occupies the central group of rooms, his second wife those on her right, and so forth. Generally the women's apartments all communicate with one another. But if a woman has a quarrelsome disposition or gets on badly with her co-wives for any other reason, her quarters will be separated from those of the next-door wife by a low party wall, to prevent undue trespassing by her co-wives or their children.

342 593 A woman's apartments make up a self-contained section in the homestead. This is her *dug* (pl. *dugət*). Basically *dug* means a single room, but it is extended to mean the single set of rooms belonging to one wife. In the Tale family every woman with children is entitled to her own *dug*. Women guard this right jealously, and if a man has not built separate quarters for his wife by the time that she has had her first child,